

INSPECTION REPORT

RAINFORD C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

RAINFORD

LEA area: St. Helens

Unique reference number: 104790

Headteacher: Mrs. J. E. Cutler

Reporting inspector: Mr. M. A. Mackay
23112

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th November 2000

Inspection number: 225111

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cross Pit Lane
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Appropriate authority: St. Helens

Name of chair of governors: Reverend F. R. N. Michell

Date of previous inspection: 16th September 1996

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Michael Mackay	Registered inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Stage • Art • Information and communication technology • English as an additional language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of school? • How high are standards? • How well are the pupils taught? • How well is the school lead and managed
Robert Folks	Lay inspector		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development • How well the school cares for its pupils • How well the school works in partnership with parents
John Berry	Team inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science • Design & technology • Physical education • Religious education • Equal opportunities 	
Pauline Goodsell	Team inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics • History • Music • Special educational needs 	
Elaine Radley	Team inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum and other opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

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Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
 Inspection Quality Division
 The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England junior and infant school. It has three hundred and sixteen pupils, which makes it a larger than average primary school. There are thirty-four children in the reception classes. The school does not have a nursery class. The children's attainment is above average when they are admitted to the Foundation Stage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has dropped significantly in the past two years. It is now 4.1 per cent and is below the national average. Less than fifteen per cent of the pupils have special educational needs. This is below the national average. The number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is below average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average. In recent years, the number of pupils transferring from other schools to classes in Years 5 and 6 has increased. Last year, for example, twenty-eight per cent of the Year 6 pupils who sat the national tests arrived partway through Key Stage 2.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good education for its pupils. At both key stages, the standards the pupils attain in English, mathematics and science are above average. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The school provides a broad, interesting and relevant curriculum. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher, senior teachers and governors provide a good steer to the school's development and make sure that its aims and values are clearly reflected in its work. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- At both key stages, the pupils achieve above average standards in English, mathematics, science, art and religious education;
- The pupils at Key Stage 2 attain above average standards in physical education and most aspects of information and control technology;
- The pupils behave well and have very good attitudes to school, their work, and each other;
- The pupils' attendance is very good;
- Nearly seventy per cent of the teaching is good or better;
- The provision for children at the Foundation Stage is good;
- The school provides a very good range of activities outside normal lessons, and makes very good arrangements for ensuring that the pupils' learning is enriched through links with parents, the community and partner institutions;
- The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good;
- The school has very good procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development and for monitoring and promoting their good behaviour;
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good;
- The aims and values of the school are clearly reflected in its work;
- The school makes very good use of its budget and other funding.

What could be improved

- The standards in writing throughout Key Stage 2;
- The consistency of teachers' subject knowledge in science and geography;
- The way the teachers use the classroom support staff at the beginning and end of lessons.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since then, it has successfully addressed the key issues in the report. It has significantly raised the quality of the teaching. The leadership has made good progress in devising and implementing ways of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The prospectus and annual reports to parents now contain the statutory information on attendance. The school uses the results of assessments more effectively to plan future work and organise the learning. Although the school has made very significant progress towards implementing the curriculum for information and communication technology, it does not yet provide the pupils with sufficient opportunities to learn about the uses of monitoring and control. The standards have improved in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and religious education.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	B	B	C
Mathematics	A	B	C	D
Science	A	C	B	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The standards in English, mathematics and science, in the work seen, are above average and much higher now than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. In the national tests in 2000, the pupils attained standards above the average for all schools and close to those attained by pupils in similar schools in English and science. In mathematics, the pupils attained the average standard in relation to all schools but below that achieved by pupils at similar schools. The mathematics results for 2000, however, are not characteristic of the school. The inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average and these should be reflected in the 2001 tests, but the upward trend in results at the school is slower than the national one. This is mainly because too few of the higher attaining pupils achieve the standard expected of them. The school has now set challenging targets for its higher attaining pupils. In other subjects, the pupils attain above average standards in art, physical education, religious education and most aspects of information and communication technology. Most pupils achieve well because they work hard and benefit from good teaching.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils show a very strong interest in lessons and other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils behave very well. They respect the feelings and values of other pupils, and they listen attentively in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils show a high level of initiative and personal responsibility. They form positive relationships with adults and pupils.

Attendance	Very Good. Attendance is very high compared to most schools.
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The pupils' attitudes and values are a significant strength of the school. The pupils are attentive and co-operative in lessons, and pleasant and good-natured in their play. They strive hard to improve their work. The pupils are thoughtful and considerate towards all those who share the life and work of the school. The older pupils very willingly accept responsibility for many routine tasks. In doing so, they make a significant contribution to the school's ethos of high standards of behaviour and friendliness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
73 lessons seen	Good	good	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good at both key stages. A significant strength of the teaching is the quality of the marking. The teachers frequently write helpful comments about how the pupils might improve their work. The pupils, therefore, develop a good understanding of their own learning and of what they need to do to improve. Overall, the main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' planning, their management and organisation of the pupils, and the opportunities they provide for pupils to think for themselves. As a result, the pupils work productively. They quickly acquire skills and knowledge. Another strength of the teaching is the good rapport the teachers establish with their pupils. This encourages them to work hard and maintain good levels of interest. The main weakness in the teaching is a lack of subject knowledge in some aspects of science and geography. Occasionally, too, some teachers do not make sufficient use of learning support assistants at the beginning and end of lessons to ensure that the lower attaining pupils benefit fully from the activities. These weaknesses sometimes reduce the pace of learning. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are good. The school has effective strategies for meeting the needs of most of its pupils. It makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. It has changed the way the pupils are organised to enable it to provide better support to higher attaining pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned. It provides well for the pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school provides work that is well matched to the needs of the pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school ensures that the pupils have full access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The curriculum encourages pupils to respond to the spiritual dimension in their lives. It teaches the difference between right and wrong, and provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and acquire a good understanding of their own and other cultures.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The procedures for monitoring and promoting the pupils' academic, personal and social development are good.
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The school works very well in partnership with the parents. It keeps them well informed about its work and has very good arrangements for ensuring that parents are able to make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning at school and at home. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided at the school are good. The school's provision for activities outside normal lessons is very good. The school has very good relationships with other local schools. It has many useful links with the local community. These help to enhance the quality of learning for all pupils. The school provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn the uses of computers for monitoring and control because it does not yet have the necessary resources. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and supporting their personal development are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership provides a very clear vision for the development of the school and ensures that its aims are very well reflected in its work. The school is very well managed. Its life is orderly, purposeful and friendly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and play a significant role in preparing the school's improvement plan. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school evaluates its performance well. It has effective arrangements for evaluating the quality of the teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes very effective use of the available funding and other resources to support the pupils' learning.

The school is very well lead and managed. The leadership has succeeded in forging a vision for the school's improvement and development. It has created a team that works well in the interests of the pupils and has established a clear set of aims and values that are appropriate to a church school. These are clearly reflected in its work. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is adequate. The accommodation is appropriate to the needs of the pupils and is used very well for teaching and for the sports clubs and music activities that are held outside normal lesson time. The school has sufficient resources to teach the curriculum. The headteacher manages the budget very well. The governing body closely monitors the school's expenditure and has very good arrangements for ensuring that the school applies the principles of best value when buying services to support its work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The children like school; The school is well led and managed; The school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best; The school helps the children to become 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way that school keeps the parents informed of how their children are getting on; The amount of work the children get to do at home

mature and responsible; • The parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.	
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The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school. The inspection evidence does not support the views of the parents who feel that the school provides insufficient information about how their children are getting on or who feel that the school does not provide sufficient work for the pupils to do at home. The amount and quality of information provided for parents are good. The amount of work set for pupils to do at home is satisfactory, and very similar to that set by most schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of most of the children who enter the reception classes at the age of four is above the expected level. In particular, the children's language and social skills are well developed. During their time in the reception classes, the children make good progress in personal and social development, language, literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. Nearly all of the children are likely to attain the early goals in all the areas of learning. The children make good progress and achieve well because the teaching is good and the learning activities are well planned and relevant to the children's needs.
2. The inspection evidence indicates that standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 are above average and are better now than at the time of the last inspection. This is because the school has been very successful in raising the quality of the teaching to a point where it is consistently good across the key stage. The teachers' effective implementation of the national initiatives in literacy and numeracy has helped the school to sustain above average levels of attainment since 1997. In the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' attainment in comparison with all schools was well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. In relation to similar schools, the number of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing was well above average; in reading, the number was above average, and in mathematics, it was average.
3. The standards of work seen in science, art and religious education at Key Stage 1 are above average. In design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education, the pupils attain standards expected for their age. The significant amount of good teaching in most subjects helps the pupils to achieve well.
4. The pupils at Key Stage 2 attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards are better now than they were at the time of the last inspection. This is because the school responded quickly to the issues raised by the inspection and made significant improvements to the quality of the teaching. Since 1997, it has worked hard to ensure that the good standards of teaching are maintained. The school has revised the way it organises the pupils for learning. For example, it makes very effective use of setting by attainment for lessons in English and mathematics to ensure that the teaching is better matched to the needs of the pupils. However, standards in writing are lower than expected because the school does not have effective ways of teaching the pupils to write sustained pieces of work for a range of purposes. In science, the teaching is now very effective in helping the pupils to undertake practical investigative activities. In the 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds, the pupils attained above average standards in English and science, and average standards in mathematics when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, the pupils attained average standards in English and science but below average standards in mathematics. The Year 2000 results were weaker in mathematics than the other subjects largely because the pupils who were admitted late into the Year 6 class had below average attainment. The inspection evidence indicates that a higher proportion of the current Year 6 pupils is likely to attain Level 4 (the expected level) or above in the 2001 national tests than achieved those levels in the most recent national tests. This is because the teaching is more effective and there are fewer pupils transferring to the school partway through the key stage. Nevertheless, too few of the higher attaining pupils are achieving well enough at Level 5.
5. In the work seen in other subjects at Key Stage 2, the pupils attain above average standards in art, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. In all of the other subjects, they attain at least satisfactory standards. Standards at the school have risen significantly in art, information and communication technology and religious education since the last inspection.

6. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans for literacy and numeracy because their learning problems are identified early and the work they do is well matched to their needs. The pupils for whom English is an additional language attain well because the school pursues a policy of inclusion that ensures the pupils are well supported in order to give them access to the full range of learning opportunities across the curriculum.

7. Standards have risen overall since the last inspection because the school responded well to the key issue to raise attainment by significantly improving the quality of the teaching. This has been done successfully in all of the subjects but significantly so in information and communication technology, religious education and art. At the time of the last inspection, for example, the standards attained by the pupils at both key stages were below average in these subjects because the teaching was unsatisfactory. Now, the teaching is at least satisfactory and much of it is good or better in all three subjects. In information and communication technology, for example, better teaching and better access to computers have helped the school to raise standards of performance significantly so that many of the Year 6 pupils attain well above what is expected in most aspects of the subject.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The pupils have very good attitudes to learning and are very well behaved. Their personal development is of a very high standard and relationships within the school are very good. The pupils really enjoy coming to school. They make the most of the many and varied activities offered during and outside normal lessons. The level of involvement and enthusiasm the pupils showed for the extra-curricular activities offered during the inspection is a good example of this. The pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and are eager for knowledge. They are friendly, self-assured and courteous and make visitors to the school feel particularly welcome. They socialise very well and work co-operatively and individually. The children under the age of five make a very good start. Their positive attitudes, good behaviour and willingness to work hard help them to become effective learners. The attitudes, behaviour and relationships of the pupils are a credit to the school and have a positive impact on standards.

9. In lessons, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. The pupils work hard, show lots of enthusiasm in their lessons and respond very well to the teachers. Outside lessons, the pupils are usually well behaved. They move in an orderly fashion around the school and observe the school rules. At playtimes and lunchtimes, most of the pupils quickly become involved in the range of activities. An air of enthusiasm and enjoyment is present whatever they are doing. The parents feel that the school has high expectations of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The inspection evidence confirms that this is so. There have been no temporary or permanent exclusions.

10. There are many examples of the pupils showing initiative and taking responsibility in the school. The pupils who are monitors, for example, carry out their duties enthusiastically, fairly and sensibly, and are respected by the other pupils. The house system also provides good opportunities for pupils to participate in the daily life of the school. The pupils elect the house captains and work hard to gain points for their own houses. The older pupils often help the younger ones. Examples of this were seen at lunchtime when older pupils were observed befriending and helping the younger ones in the infants' playground. Another example of pupils' willingness to take on responsibilities was seen when Year 5 and 6 pupils left the direct supervision of the teacher in order to work on the computers. On all occasions, the pupils worked independently, responsibly and conscientiously. The pupils form constructive relationships with each other in lessons and at other times. Relationships between the staff and the pupils are very positive and help to create a very good learning environment. The pupils make good use of the opportunities provided by the school in assemblies and in lessons for them to consider the effect of their actions on others. It is evident from their actions that nearly all of the pupils value other people's views and feelings, and show respect for property. The pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language enjoy taking part in school activities and

feel fully included in the learning tasks for all subjects. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. The overall impression gained by the inspection team was that the school is a harmonious and friendly place.

11. The rate of attendance is well above the national average and improves slightly each year. Both authorised and unauthorised absences are below the national average. The pupils respond very well to the attendance procedures and very few of them are late for lessons. As a result, lessons start promptly and the pupils settle quickly to work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of the teaching is good at all three key stages. In ninety-six per cent of the lessons, the teaching was satisfactory or better. It was good or better in sixty-eight per cent of the lessons and very good or better in nineteen per cent of them. The unsatisfactory teaching occurred in only four per cent of lessons. This is a very substantial improvement on the quality of teaching found at the time of the last inspection when the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in twenty-one per cent of the lessons. The improvements are the outcome of vigorous and concerted efforts by the headteacher and senior colleagues to improve the teachers' expertise across a range of subjects. For example, the school has very effective arrangements for implementing the national initiatives in literacy and numeracy. One of the most significant achievements of the headteacher and the senior teachers is the success they have had in raising the teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Another achievement is the more effective sharing of good practice within the school. For example, the teachers' confidence and subject expertise in information technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is clearly reflected in the higher standards attained by the pupils and the progress they make.

13. The teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. The teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan well to match the learning activities to the needs of the children. They manage the children very well, and organise their learning activities skilfully so that time and resources are used effectively. Much of the week's learning is based upon well-chosen themes that give interest and relevance to the learning activities. A significant strength of the teaching is the very good rapport that the teachers and classroom support assistants establish with the children. This encourages the children to work hard and helps them to become confident learners. Another significant strength is the way the teachers use assessments of the children's knowledge and skills to plan further work. This ensures that the teachers have a good understanding of what each child needs to learn next and what learning activities need to be planned to ensure good progress is sustained.

14. The teaching is good across Key Stages 1 and 2 in English, mathematics, science, art, physical education and religious education. In all the other subjects, it is satisfactory overall and sometimes good or better. In most aspects of information and communication technology, for example, the teaching in Years 5 and 6 is at least good and sometimes very good.

15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The learning activities are well matched to the needs of the pupils. The pupils' individual education plans contain appropriately challenging targets for improvement. The teachers carefully assess the work of the pupils and systematically record their progress. The pupils make good progress because the work is well matched to their needs and the teachers are clear about how the pupils should work towards their learning targets, using carefully planned activities. Occasionally, the teachers do not use the learning support assistants effectively during the introductory and closing parts of the lessons, missing opportunities to support pupils or to observe and assess their progress. Other teachers, however, carefully plan how the support assistants can help during the parts of each lesson when the pupils are working as a class, as well as in the main part of the lessons when the pupils are working individually or in small groups. The

teachers make satisfactory use of homework to support the learning of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

16. The main strengths of the teaching are to be found in the teachers' planning, and in the effective way the teachers manage and organise the pupils and their learning. In many subjects, the teachers have consistently high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. This is often demonstrated in the skilful use of challenging questions and activities that demand that the pupils think for themselves, particularly in lessons in English, mathematics, science and religious education, but also in other subjects. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, in information and communication technology, the teacher's skilful planning and effective briefing of the support assistant helped the pupils to gain a very good understanding of how to create impressive multimedia presentations that incorporated graphics, hyperlinks and sound effects. Another strength of the teaching is the quality of the relationships that the teachers establish with their pupils. This encourages the pupils to work hard and to value their own efforts because the teachers also value them. The very good rapport established between teachers and the pupils encourages good behaviour among the pupils. One of the significant improvements in the teaching is the better organisation of pupils for learning. The teachers' use of setting (organising pupils by prior attainment) is having a significant impact upon the standards achieved by all of the pupils.

17. There are far fewer weaknesses in the teaching now than at the time of the last inspection. Of those that remain, none is a consistent feature of the teaching. Sometimes, however, the pace of lessons is too slow or the teaching does not always make best use of the available classroom support staff, particularly in supporting learning during the introductory part of lessons, and at the end of them, when pupils are reviewing what they have learned. In one or two subjects, too, there are teachers who do not have sufficient subject knowledge to ensure that the work set is well organised and appropriately challenging for all pupils. For example, in a Key Stage 2 science lesson the teacher lacked sufficient knowledge of the lesson's subject matter, and in a geography lesson, the teacher did not successfully organise a suitable range of learning tasks. Although the teachers' subject knowledge in information and communication technology is much better than it was, it is still weak in the use of control and monitoring programs.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

18. The school provides a good range of appropriate opportunities within the curriculum for children at the Foundation Stage and for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2. The learning activities are well planned and relevant to the pupils' interests and aptitudes. The curriculum is well balanced and meets the statutory requirements to teach all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. In order to meet the needs of the pupils in mixed-year classes, the school has introduced a two-year cycle of topics in history and geography. However, there is a lack of consistency among parallel classes. The current arrangements do not adequately ensure that the pupils receive equality of opportunity in these aspects of the curriculum because the topics chosen by the teachers do not always cover the same range of skills or learning opportunities. The school has good strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy. More recently, the school has successfully introduced the numeracy strategy. The pupils are well organised for learning in both subjects.

19. The school provides a very good range of activities outside normal lessons that enrich the pupils' learning. The pupils have good opportunities to participate in local football and netball competitions. The school offers a good range of other sporting activities that includes rugby, badminton and gymnastics. The pupils who elect to join the gymnastic club are encouraged to work towards the national awards. The school organises an annual residential visit for the pupils in Year 6. This provides good opportunities for the pupils to learn new physical and social skills. There is an active choir, an orchestra and a number of recorder groups for pupils in Years 2 and 3. The teachers are keen to ensure that the pupils' musical skills are recognised and well used. For example, the pupils are encouraged to play in assemblies. In one assembly, during the inspection, there was a very memorable

moment when a Year 6 pupil played *The Last Post* as the pupils reflected upon the meaning of Remembrance Day. All clubs are well attended. At the very popular line-dancing club, the pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning new steps and joined in enthusiastically with all of the dances. The teachers' hard work in providing such a good range of activities in order to meet the needs and interests of their pupils is commendable. It has a very positive impact upon the pupils' personal and social development.

20. The school fully embraces its role within the local community and makes very good use of opportunities to enhance the curriculum. In recent years, the school has developed a number of useful links with local business. For example, in their work with a local company on developing a local land-fill site, the pupils plant trees and monitor their growth. Through its links with a large local company, the school has been able to provide additional computers. The children in the reception classes regularly visit a local teashop to support their learning about the world of work. A Year 5 class is currently undertaking a geography topic on whether the high street should be closed to traffic. This has already involved the pupils in canvassing the opinions of the public and members of the local business community. The pupils are preparing a video of their findings that is to be presented to the local parish council.

21. The school successfully fosters the pupils' initiatives and achievements, both in and out of school. These are recognised in special assemblies. The school has a well organised system for rewarding good work and behaviour that culminates in special awards given to the Year 6 pupils who have contributed most to the life of the school. The school provides good opportunities for the pupils to get involved in fund raising for charity. This plays a very important part in developing the pupils' social awareness. The pupils support a wide range of charities, including *Help the Aged*, *RSPCA* and *Farm Africa*. The Year 6 pupils often use their own initiative to plan and organise events to support those in need.

22. There is good provision for pupils' personal and social education. The school has appropriate arrangements for sex education and for drugs awareness education. It has good links with the local police who make a positive contribution to the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, two police officers led a very successful session with the Year 5 and 6 pupils, focussing on the consequences of petty crime. The school also develops the pupils' awareness of safety through the use of the *Walkwise* programme and the *Crucial Crew* scheme. The school makes effective use of its system of house teams to help promote citizenship skills among its pupils. The older pupils offer themselves for election to house captain. The pupils, either as candidates or as voters, take the elections seriously. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for many aspects of school life and provides good opportunities for pupils to do this. For example, they are encouraged to take on the roles of librarian, house captain, play-leader or house monitor. The school is seeking to establish a school council that will provide greater opportunities for the pupils to become involved in the life and work of the school. It has recently sent two teachers on training courses in preparation for the next phase of the initiative.

23. The provision made for the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is a strength of the school. In class work, assemblies and acts of worship, both at school and in the local church, there are many opportunities for the pupils to reflect upon the spiritual and moral dimensions of life. The adults at the school set the pupils a good example in moral matters. They teach the difference between right and wrong very well and relate it to the idea of personal responsibility for actions. The school makes good use of the teachings of Christianity and other world faiths to support its provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school works hard to promote the pupils' knowledge of other cultures. It ensures that the work in music, art and religious education reflects a wide range of cultures. In religious education, for example, the pupils study six different world religions. In music, the school provides the pupils with opportunities to listen to and appreciate a wide range of styles and forms. For example, on one day during the inspection, the pupils in a Year 2 class listened attentively to the *Cradle Song* by Brahms then danced to the *Macaranda* in the line dancing club.

24. The school has very constructive relationships with partner institutions, especially with the local secondary school. Annual induction days are arranged for the Year 6 pupils and there is close liaison particularly for those pupils with special educational needs. The pupils regular use the high school's computers. They have benefited greatly from this. The school works in close partnership with the other local primary schools. It has recently hosted a joint book quiz as part of the schools' book week.

25. The school makes effective provision for the pupils with special educational needs. The school staff and the local authority's special educational needs teacher work closely together to ensure that the pupils' individual needs are met and that they have full access to the curriculum. The good work done by the learning support assistants when they are well deployed has a significant impact on the progress of pupils. The school has carefully planned programmes in place to support pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. The pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported. Their cultural backgrounds are valued by the school and shared with the other pupils. This helps to maintain high levels of self-esteem among the pupils and encourages them to work hard. Their contribution to class work in art, geography and religious education enriches the learning of all of the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. The school has good arrangements for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. It has improved its child protection procedures in response to the last inspection. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its pupils. The members of the staff know the pupils well and respond sensitively to their needs. The class teachers provide the main pastoral support, but this is well supplemented by support from other members of the staff, including the administration assistants and lunchtime supervisors. The school's health and safety procedures are good and meet the statutory requirements. The school makes effective use of the support provided by outside specialists, including the school nurse, speech therapist, audiologist and educational welfare officer. The procedures for dealing with accidents are very good. The school has three qualified first aiders and sufficient first aid resources.

27. The school has very successful procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour. These procedures are applied consistently. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good, and those for monitoring and supporting the pupils' educational and personal development are very good. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection in developing its procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment. The progress of individuals and groups is now more carefully tracked through a useful range of assessments that includes assessments when pupils enter the school, national tests and standardised tests. The assessments are analysed and used to set the pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons; this has had a significant impact on the standards attained by the pupils. However, the assessments are not used consistently to plan work at the appropriate level for all groups of pupils. This has resulted in underachievement among some of the higher attaining pupils. In writing, for example, the group targets set for them are, on the evidence the inspection, not challenging enough.

28. The school has good procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs. It uses a range of effective methods, including assessments when the children enter school, and standardised tests and teacher assessments. The information is well used to set targets in the pupils' individual education plans. The school has good arrangements in place to support pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. It liaises well with special educational needs staff from a range of other agencies. The school ensures that the provision for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is fully implemented. The pupils for whom English is an additional language are well provided for. The school has good links with their parents and with outside agencies to help it meet the needs of the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29. The parents have very positive views of the school, which the inspection team endorses. Their responses at the pre-inspection meeting and in the returns to the questionnaire indicate a very high level of parental support. They also indicate that most parents are pleased with the way the school is performing. The school and the parents work well in partnership for the benefit of the pupils. The parents are very involved with the work of the school and make a considerable contribution towards their children's learning. The school provides the parents with very good information about events and the curriculum. This partnership is a real strength of the provision and makes a significant contribution toward the pupils' learning and personal development.

30. The school provides good information for parents about the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The parents are invited to work together with the school to extend the learning opportunities for their children. This is having a significant impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

31. The school provides very good information to keep the parents informed, particularly about pupils' progress. They receive monthly newsletters, information about school events and a curriculum statement for each term. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report are very informative. The content of both documents has improved since the last inspection. The annual reports on pupils' attainment and progress are very detailed and identify individual targets for improvement. The parents find them to be informative and helpful. The school also provides a comprehensive and well-situated parents' notice board at the entrance to the school.

32. Many parents help in the school. Some help in classrooms and many others help with educational visits and visits to the church or swimming baths. During the week of the inspection the road safety project, *Walkwise*, which successfully linked work in geography and design technology, could not have taken place without the parents' supporting role as supervisors. The school is well supported by the work of the parents and teachers association, F.O.R.C.E.S, (Friends of Rainford C.E. School). This very enthusiastic body arranges numerous events for pupils and their parents, and raises considerable sums of money for the school. The support is invaluable and the money is used very sensibly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher has a clear vision of how she would like the school to develop and improve. Her very good leadership and management skills have helped to forge a committed team of teachers and support assistants that is united in putting the pupils and their achievements first. A strength of the leadership is the willingness of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to lead by example. Their work has inspired other teachers and ensured that they share the willingness and the capacity to manage change effectively.

34. The headteacher plays a significant part in creating the school's sense of common purpose and in making sure that the school's values are fully reflected in its work. She works closely with her senior staff on the major action plans for change. The school has successfully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy because the headteacher and the teachers responsible for the two areas prepared the ground well, and provided good levels of support to the teachers. This has fostered a spirit of confidence, and a determination to do a good job among all members of the staff.

35. The senior management team makes good use of its analyses of how well the pupils do in the National Curriculum tests and in a range of other assessments of performance. This provides the school with a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in the achievements of individual pupils, and enables it to assess the relative performance of different groups of pupils. The leadership's analyses

of results are matched by the quality of its responses to emerging areas of weakness or concern. The analysis of the 1999 national tests, for example, led to relevant and well thought-out action plans to further improve standards in writing. The analysis of assessment evidence is helping the school to make more accurate predictions about the progress of pupils and the standards they are likely to achieve in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. For example, recently, it has led the school to revise its targets for the higher attaining pupils in 2001 and beyond.

36. As part of the planning process, the headteacher and senior staff carry out a thorough review of the work of the school, paying particular attention to the learning outcomes and how the school has performed in the National Curriculum tests. The governors play a significant role in assisting the school to determine the plan and agree the educational priorities identified in it. These are clearly linked to appropriate action plans. A recent example of this is the school's good response to the pupils' underachievement in information technology. By improving the teachers' subject expertise and providing the pupils with better access to computers, the school has significantly raised standards in information and communication technology.

37. The governors are well organised. They have effective committees and good procedures for monitoring the school's work. The governors with special responsibilities, such as the named governors for special educational needs, literacy and numeracy, meet with the co-ordinators regularly and observe the work done in lessons. The quality of the dialogue between managers and governors is high and serves the school well. For example, the governor with responsibility for special educational needs is very supportive of the work done in school. He has a very good overview of how the policy is implemented, and this helps to ensure that the governors make good provision for pupils with special educational needs. This level of involvement occurs in other aspects of the work of the governors. It enables the governing body to hold the school to account for its performance and to give it the support it needs in order to maintain the momentum for change. The governing body has drawn up appropriate arrangements for appraising the work and effectiveness of the headteacher. It has a useful strategy to help it implement performance management.

38. The school has good systems for evaluating and improving the quality of teaching. The headteacher monitors the teaching regularly and the results of this monitoring are well used to support each teacher's professional development. As a result, the school has prepared its teachers well for the introduction of national initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. Through its policy of joint planning, the school is able to use the strengths of its best teachers to influence the rest and embrace the changes needed to ensure success.

39. The teachers who have responsibilities for co-ordinating subjects are delegated the powers they need to enable them to be effective managers. For each subject, the co-ordinator produces an action plan for its development and improvement, monitors the teachers' planning and manages the learning resources. This has been done most successfully in the following areas: early years education, literacy, numeracy, special educational needs, and information and communication technology. The co-ordinators of these subjects offer good levels of support to their colleagues and receive from them high levels of co-operation.

40. The school's delegated budget is well managed by the headteacher and governing body. They plan systematically for all expenditure and have a clear idea about the cost of school development. The school makes effective use of the available funds and grants to improve the quality of the education it provides. For example, funds raised by the parents' association have been used to enhance the playground facilities. Financial control and administration are efficient and effective, supported by well-trained administrative staff. The governing body closely monitors the performance of the school and uses the analyses of assessment results, including comparison with similar schools, to target spending in ways that will support improvements in standards. It makes effective use of the skills and knowledge of local education authority departments when seeking competitive quotations for educational services

and equipment. The governors understand the principles of best value very well and use them effectively.

41. The school makes good use of the new technologies for administrative and teaching purposes such as budget preparation and for recording information about its pupils. It has drawn up comprehensive plans to improve the resources for teaching information technology. These are now close to fruition. When the new computers are installed, they will double the opportunities pupils will have to use computers to support their learning in many subjects. The school uses its present learning resources in the new technologies well. For example, the older pupils know how to create multimedia presentations and access the Internet in order to use the World Wide Web for researching work in history, religious education and science.

42. The school has a sufficient number of qualified teachers and learning-support assistants to match the demands of the curriculum. The teachers and members of the support staff work effectively together to promote the pupils' learning. This is most clearly seen in the work of the classroom support assistants who, when they are well deployed, make a significant contribution to the pupils' development through the supervision of learning activities. Occasionally, however, the teachers do not make best use of their skills. This has been recognised by the school in its most recent training programme for staff. It has good arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers.

43. The accommodation is attractive and well maintained by the caretaker and his assistants. The grounds provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about the natural world. The school has thought carefully, too, about how the play areas contribute to the pupils' personal and social development. With the help of the parents and teachers association, the school has furnished the playgrounds with a range of markings to aid play. They have also provided a substantial number of seats to create quiet areas for pupils who want them. It has re-furnished the reception classrooms and equipped them well to teach the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the school has not provided sufficient large, outdoor play equipment for the children. This is mainly because it does not have the capacity to store it.

44. The school makes efficient use of its resources to provide a good education for its pupils. It is well run and increasingly effective in delivering the National Curriculum and the national initiatives such as literacy and numeracy. It spends its money wisely and always with an eye to improving the quality of its educational provision in order to raise the standards attained by the pupils. The school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher and the governors should:

1. Raise standards in writing* among pupils at Key Stage 2 by:
 - ◆ Devising and implementing effective methods for teaching the pupils how to plan, structure and edit pieces of sustained writing;
 - ◆ Helping and encouraging pupils to spend more time at home working on pieces of sustained writing;
 - ◆ Adapting and incorporating into the school's practice the methods and approaches to the teaching of writing that are published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in its document, *Grammar for Writing*.
 - ◆ Providing more challenging work for the higher attaining pupils;
 - ◆ Making all pupils more aware of the targets they need to attain;(Paragraphs 4, 60, 65 and 66)
2. Improve the consistency of teachers' subject knowledge in science and geography* by:
 - ◆ Devising and implementing ways of sharing good practice;
 - ◆ Strengthening the leadership and management skills of the subject co-ordinators;
 - ◆ Improving the teachers' use of planning (in geography) to ensure the pupils receive equality of access to geographical knowledge, skills and understanding;
 - ◆ Providing greater opportunities for teachers' professional development.(Paragraphs 17, 74 and 86)
3. Improve the teachers' use of learning support staff by:
 - ◆ Making sure teachers consistently share the planning and the lesson objectives with the support assistants;
 - ◆ Providing the support assistants with clear instructions on how they are to help the pupils with special educational needs during whole class activities at the beginning and end of lessons;
 - ◆ Providing better opportunities for teachers and learning support assistants to share training on provision for pupils with special educational needs.(Paragraphs 15, 17 and 69)

46. Minor issues:

- Improve the pupils' knowledge and use of the school library; (63, 66)
- Improve the range of large, outdoor play equipment for children at the Foundation Stage. (43, 55)

N.B. The issues marked thus * have already been identified by the school and appear in its development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	49	27	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	316
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	37

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	200	23	22	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	22	21
	Girls	22	22	21
	Total	43	44	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	98 (94)	93 (96)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	21	22
	Girls	22	21	22
	Total	44	42	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (96)	93 (96)	98 (96)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	26	24	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	22	25
	Girls	23	18	23
	Total	45	40	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (84)	80 (81)	96 (79)
	National	75 (71)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	22	26
	Girls	23	19	23
	Total	44	41	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (79)	82 (77)	98 (81)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	274
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.3
Average class size	28.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	110

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A

Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	549208
Total expenditure	538806
Expenditure per pupil	1595
Balance brought forward from previous year	51253
Balance carried forward to next year	61655

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	319
Number of questionnaires returned	141

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to dis-agree	Strongly dis-agree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	41	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	40	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	45	13	1	0
The teaching is good.	54	40	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	50	15	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	43	4	1	1
The school is well led and managed	71	26	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	37	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	33	4	3	6

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

47. The attainment of the children who enter the reception classes is above average. The children are assessed soon after they are admitted to school. The teaching makes effective use of assessment information to plan an appropriate range of learning opportunities that ensures the children make good progress. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, nearly all of the children will have attained the Early Learning Goals in all of the Areas of Learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

48. The children's personal and social skills develop rapidly throughout the foundation stage. The children achieve well because the teaching provides them with many opportunities to learn how to organise themselves, make choices, and reflect on what they do. They learn to work together and to tidy up when they have finished for the day. The children quickly learn that they have a good measure of independence and need to be responsible for some of their learning. They acquire a good knowledge of classroom routines and follow them diligently. The children are expected to select some activities for themselves. They do this very sensibly, observing, for example, restrictions on the number of children who may use the computer or the home corner at any one time. The children make good progress in working collaboratively. They share equipment and enjoy the opportunities they have to play together in the home corner. They make good use of this time when they re-enact earlier experiences such as visits to the local teashop. In both classes, the children persevere with tasks, behave very well and show sensitivity to each other's feelings.

Language and literacy

49. By the end of the reception year, the proportion of the children likely to achieve the early learning goals is above average. The teachers skilfully engage the children in conversations about the activities they do. This encourages the children to speak clearly and develop a useful vocabulary to describe what they are doing. For example, during a walk to the local church, the children observed and talked confidently about the sights and sounds they encountered. They commented on the nearby road works and learned much about how to care for dogs from a passing dog owner. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the children enjoy listening to stories. They pay close attention to the teacher and respond well to events in the stories. They are keen to answer questions and to share their opinions. The children recognise many words by sight and are beginning to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words.

50. The children quickly acquire an appropriate understanding of the writing process. They hold pencils correctly and use a combination of conventional letters and invented marks. Many know what they want to write and are successfully mastering copy-writing skills. The classrooms are well decorated with labels that encourage the children to read and write for themselves. The children use their knowledge of traditional stories and rhymes to invent new episodes. In one lesson, the children discussed the nursery rhyme '*Little Boy Blue*' and, with the teacher's skilful support, wrote a sequel. The teaching makes effective use of well-planned writing activities. These provide the children with many interesting and relevant opportunities to use speaking, listening and writing to make sense of their experiences. The children learn quickly and achieve well because the work is well matched to their needs.

Mathematics

51. Nearly all of the children achieve well, and most are likely to reach the early learning goals by the time they are five. This is because the teachers frequently provide opportunities for the children to count and to investigate number and shape. The children make good progress in counting objects and matching them when they play with sets of small toys. The children make good use of number lines to count on when they learn how to write the numbers zero to twenty. They use appropriate terms such as 'larger', 'smaller', 'one more' and 'one less' when they describe objects and how many of them they have.

52. In both classes, the children make effective use of counters and other aids to consolidate what they know about numbers. They recognise numbers one to ten in words and zero to twenty in digits, and discuss simple number operations. The teaching makes good use of action rhymes and songs to support the children's learning. The children are confident when working with two-dimensional shapes and when using coloured beads to make number patterns. They match sets and say which is 'bigger' and which is 'smaller'. The teaching is good because it includes effective planning for a wide range of interesting activities that challenge the children to solve everyday number problems. The children learn well because the activities are relevant to their needs and provide good opportunities for them to consolidate newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. The proportion of children likely to attain the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception classes is above average. Most of the children achieve well. They are inquisitive about the world around them and use their language skills well to learn about what they see and do. The teaching provides a wide range of interesting learning activities that enables the children to make good progress in acquiring the skills they need to make sense of the world around them. The teachers' planning ensures that the children select from a wide range of activities and tasks to develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, the children investigate the properties of clay and bubbles, and examine autumn leaves. In imaginative play, they enter the adult world of work when they role-play being police officers and café owners.

54. The children learn to use simple tools and make good use of glue, scissors and sticky-tape. The children use computers with confidence and with a high degree of independence. They use the mouse to control the screen cursor and to access simple menus when they select programs. Nearly all of the children are able to use the 'drag and drop' function in simple interactive programs. The higher attaining children understand that the 'bin' and the 'mouse' may be used to discard unwanted items. The teaching provides a very-well planned and implemented set of activities that extends the children's understanding of the world about them. It makes good use of role-play to promote learning. The children learn quickly and show a high degree of enthusiasm for what they do.

Physical development

55. Most of the children achieve well and are likely to attain the early learning goals by the age of five. The children develop the skills they need to use simple tools and equipment such as scissors, pencils and paintbrushes with an appropriate degree of accuracy and control. The teaching provides many opportunities for the children to manipulate small play equipment such as construction kits, and to fill and empty containers with sand or water. The children are aware of the need to give each other space to complete tasks such as making models in clay or working on the computer. They have good opportunities to play outdoors in different kinds of weather, but the school has insufficient large outdoor equipment such as climbing frames and large, wheeled toys such as tricycles.

56. In both classes, the children develop satisfactory physical skills for writing, painting and model making. The inspectors did not see the children being taught in physical education lessons, but their observations of the children at play suggest that most have a sufficient level of co-ordination and

stamina to allow them to enjoy simple team games. The teaching provides the children with many opportunities to extend and refine their physical skills. As a result, the pupils learn quickly and become confident in what they do.

Creative development

57. Most of the children achieve well and are likely to attain the early learning goals before they enter Key Stage 1. The children confidently paint large pictures, make models in clay and create collages and pictures with the help of adults. They sing a good range of songs and rhymes. They explore the sounds made by musical instruments and spend much time in imaginative play. They create imaginary worlds of home and work when they role-play running a teashop, acting as parents and god parents at baptisms, and dressing up as police officers.

58. The children design and make models using paper, scrap materials and construction kits. They talk confidently about the materials they use. They create attractive patterns in clay and create colourful bubble prints. The children enter imaginatively into the world of traditional tales when they dramatise episodes from the stories they hear. The teachers' planning for creative activities is good. It provides many opportunities for the children to explore their response to the world through a wide range of suitable media. The children, therefore, become confident painters, designers and music makers.

59. The teaching is good throughout the foundation stage. The teachers and support assistants carefully plan the learning activities to ensure that they match the needs of the children. The teaching's main strengths include the effective use of talk to promote the children's thinking skills, and the good organisation and management of the learning activities so that the children are always busy learning. The teachers know the areas of learning well and make good use of the time and resources available to them. They have good methods for assessing what the children know and can do. The assessments are regularly recorded and used to plan further work. The teachers and other adults establish a very good rapport with the children that encourages them to work hard and behave well.

ENGLISH

60. By the end of both key stages, the pupils attain above average standards. The results of the 2000 national tests at Key Stage 2 support the inspection findings. The attainment of pupils in the tests was above average. When the results are compared with those of similar schools, the school's results are average. The attainment of seven-year-olds in the national tests in 2000 was very high in both reading and writing when compared with all schools and above the average in reading when compared to standards achieved in similar schools. The standards they attained in writing were well above the average for similar schools. The school's results have improved year on year for the last four years. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' attainment in reading is very high. However, their writing skills are less well developed. Only sixty-seven per cent attained Level 4, the average standard, compared with ninety-eight per cent who attained Level 4 in reading. The school recognises writing as an area for development and has recently introduced writing targets to help raise the attainment of some lower attaining pupils.

61. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed at both key stages. The pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, and answer questions confidently. The pupils at Key Stage 2 contribute enthusiastically to discussions and are able to compare and contrast different points of view. The pupils acquire a good vocabulary with which to discuss their work. For example, they use

appropriate scientific terms confidently to describe their investigations and use an extensive technical vocabulary to explain what they are doing in information and communication technology.

62. At both key stages, the pupils read very fluently and accurately. Most of them have very positive attitudes towards the books they read and study. The Key Stage 1 pupils, with the support of their teachers, choose their reading material from a good range of texts within the structured reading scheme. They take their books home every night and enjoy reading to parents or other family members. They receive very good support from home, which helps the pupils to develop good reading habits and to tackle challenging texts. The school encourages parents to use the home/school reading diary to make comments about their children's reading. This helps the teachers to respond to the needs of individual pupils. The pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds, word order and context cues confidently to help them read unfamiliar words.

63. By Year 6, all of the pupils understand the significant ideas in the stories they read. They comment on the actions and motives of characters, explain events and draw appropriate conclusions about the authors' intentions. Almost all of the pupils have favourite authors and can say why they like their books. Many of the pupils successfully compare and contrast different forms and styles of writing. In one good literacy lesson in Year 5, for example, the pupils successfully compared three poems about winter. They discussed enthusiastically the rhythms of the poems, the poets' use of different adjectives, and the moods these conveyed. They used this knowledge to determine how best to read the poems aloud. The pupils use reference books and dictionaries to find information. However, only the Year 6 pupils use the library referencing system confidently to locate the books they need. This is mainly because the school library is used infrequently and library skills are not taught systematically.

64. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils express themselves well in their writing. Their sentences are well formed and organised into meaningful sequences. All but the lower attaining Year 2 pupils punctuate their writing correctly with full stops and capital letters. Most pupils spell common words correctly, and use their knowledge of spelling rules and letter strings to make informed attempts at spelling less familiar words. The teachers provide a broad range of writing experiences and, as a result, the pupils learn to express themselves imaginatively. The Year 2 pupils are taught in ability groups; this facilitates a closer match of work to pupils' needs particularly in classes with mixed age groups. In one good writing session, the pupils wrote lively and imaginative descriptions of characters because the teacher, through skilful questions and the use of well-prepared resources, met the writing needs of each pupil very well.

65. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have a good grasp of how to punctuate their sentences. The higher attaining pupils are beginning to use colons and semi-colons appropriately. Many of the pupils show imagination and flair in short pieces of writing. They are particularly confident in their use of adjectives and adverbs to help them write more interesting sentences. This was clearly demonstrated by an upper ability set of Years 5 and 6 pupils when the pupils and their teacher analysed a series of adverts, drawing out the key features of persuasive writing and presentation. One group of pupils used their new knowledge and insights to devise their own adverts for a computer game. The pupils used a good desktop publishing program to create powerful images, using both text and graphics. The main weakness in the writing is the pupils' ability to plan, draft and edit pieces of sustained writing across a range of forms including story, recounts, diaries, persuasive writing and writing that puts forward reasoned and balanced arguments. Throughout the school, the standards of handwriting and presentation are good. The pupils learn to join their writing in Year 2. By the time they are eleven, most of them have developed a fluent, legible style.

66. The teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. In the lessons where the teaching was good, the pupils were presented with challenging texts and made aware of what it was they were to learn by the end of the lesson. A significant strength of the teaching is the quality of the marking. The pupils' work is annotated with helpful comments and guidance that help the pupils to

improve their work. The teachers make good use of resources to support the learning, including well-chosen texts and the regular use of opportunities to use desktop publishing and word processing programs. They allow pupils to explore and share ideas through skilful questioning. In one good lesson in a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils, the teacher selected a range of sports reports taken from national newspapers. She supported the pupils in writing and editing reports of their own. Through careful discussion, she was able to draw out the need to use active verbs and include clear detail. The teacher adapted the work well to match the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. The teaching of many aspects of writing is good, but it does not prepare the pupils well enough for writing pieces of well-structured, sustained pieces of work across a wide enough range of forms. The teaching of library skills is not done consistently enough for the pupils to develop the skills they need. The teachers' lesson planning is generally good and based upon a useful set of medium term plans. The literacy co-ordinator has helped to strengthen the teaching by sharing good classroom practice gleaned from recent training for the National Literacy Strategy.

MATHEMATICS

67. The standards the pupils attain at the end of both key stages are above average. The inspection evidence indicates that the pupils make good progress throughout both key stages. The results of the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards are above average in comparison with all schools and in line with those of similar schools. The results of the national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards are close to the national average when compared to all schools but slightly below average compared to similar schools. The results are not as good as those for 1999. The main reason for this is that a high proportion of pupils who sat the 2000 tests (twenty-eight per cent) transferred from other schools in the year before the tests. Of these, nearly fifty per cent did not reach the average standard, and only eleven per cent attained above average scores. The evidence of the inspection indicates that more pupils are likely to attain Level 4 and above in the 2001 tests than in the 2000 tests. Standards at the school have improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because the school makes better use of standardised tests and teachers' assessments to track the pupils' progress and to organise the pupils into ability sets for teaching. However, standards are not as high as they could be. While most of the pupils reach the level expected for their age, fewer than expected of the higher attaining pupils achieve above average standards. The school recognises the need to address this issue and has set challenging targets for its higher attaining pupils in the 2001 national tests.

68. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 have a good understanding of place value. They count and order numbers up to twenty confidently. By the end of the key stage, they quickly and accurately count forwards and backwards in twos, fives and tens up to 100. The pupils use a range of strategies to add, for example, nine and eleven to numbers greater than ten. They round numbers confidently to the nearest ten. The pupils identify odd and even numbers and make correct coin combinations up to and above the value of £2. They accurately tell the time using half and quarter past the hour on analogue and digital displays. The pupils confidently measure with metre sticks and use centimetres accurately when they draw lines and two-dimensional shapes. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils use the mathematics they know successfully to solve number problems using multiplication and division as inverse operations. In Year 5 and 6 the pupils perform accurate calculations using all four operations and have good knowledge of place value using very large numbers. They measure angles accurately and know and use the names of different sorts of triangles such as *isosceles* and *scalene*. By the time they leave the school, the pupils have a good knowledge of the multiplication tables and use their knowledge well to multiply and divide large numbers in order to solve problems. The pupils recognise and extend number sequences, using positive and negative numbers. They understand and use equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages to solve problems, and they use co-ordinates in all four quadrants. The pupils use tally charts to help them collect data and construct graphs. Most of the pupils have a good understanding of how graphs are constructed and interpreted.

69. The quality of teaching is good overall. In some lessons, the teaching is very good. The quality of the teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' high expectations of the pupils' intellectual effort and their ability to explain their answers. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it. They use mathematical terms appropriately and make skilful use of open-ended questions to extend the pupils' mathematical understanding. Another strength of much of the teaching is the good pace of the lessons. Consequently, the pupils make good progress when learning new numeracy skills and acquire good mathematical understanding. Where the teaching is less secure, the pace of parts of the lessons is occasionally slow and the level of challenge, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, insufficient. Some teachers do not make best use of the good assessment information gained from the standardised tests in order to identify individual targets for pupils or to plan the action needed to raise the standards of attainment of the most able pupils. A good feature of the teaching is the quality of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. The plans clearly identify the small steps needed in the teaching and learning to ensure good progress. They also identify the resources needed in order to carry out the learning tasks successfully. Mathematics has a high profile in the school. In many classrooms the teachers provide interesting, interactive displays to support the pupils' learning. The teaching makes good use of resources. For example, the pupils use white boards to show their answers and computer programs to extend their knowledge of the translation of shapes. Occasionally, the teaching fails to make effective use of the learning support assistants. This is particularly the case during the introductory part of the lessons, when the assistants are sometimes not well deployed to support the lower attaining pupils.

70. Because the teaching is good, the pupils enjoy lessons and answer questions confidently. They work well independently and in small groups. For example, a group of younger Key Stage 1 pupils worked well together when estimating objects in a set. They helped each other and very quickly agreed on their answers. The teaching helps the pupils to make good use of the opportunities they have to solve problems. The pupils explain how and why they have reached their answers and suggest alternative ways of working out problems. The teachers provide good opportunities for the pupils to use mathematics in other subjects. For example, in science, the pupils are encouraged to use a wide range of measures and measurements, and in information technology, the pupils make effective use of programs that support data handling and work on shapes and direction.

SCIENCE

71. The pupils achieve above average standards by the end of both key stages. At Key Stage 1, the teachers' assessments indicate that standards in the school in 2000 are well above average when compared with all schools and in line with standards attained in similar schools. There has been a marked improvement since the last inspection, when the standards were judged to be in line with national expectations. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average. In the national tests, the number of pupils attaining Level 4 and above is above average when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, the number of pupils attaining Level 4 and above is average.

72. By the end of Key Stage 1 the pupils have a good understanding of life processes and living things. They employ a range of useful strategies to identify and classify living and non-living things. When they plan their investigations, the pupils ask questions and form sensible hypotheses as to what might happen and why. They draw sensible conclusions from what they see and present their data in a range of useful forms such as tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams. The pupils employ appropriate scientific vocabulary when they describe and evaluate their investigations. The records of their investigations are well presented. In one class, for example, the pupils completed work to show what they had learned about the conditions necessary for healthy plant growth. They provided reasoned judgements regarding plants' need for air, water and light and recorded their observations at regular intervals to demonstrate the health of plants grown under different conditions. The pupils have a good knowledge of the different functions of electrical appliances. They group them according to whether

they light up, heat up, produce sounds, or move. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of simple circuits in their written explanations and labelled drawings. A group of higher attaining pupils described clearly and concisely how they constructed a circuit for their model lighthouse. In doing so they demonstrated a good understanding of the function of all the pieces of equipment. The pupils' ability to obtain and present scientific evidence is well developed.

73. By the age of eleven, the pupils develop a wide range of strategies for conducting scientific enquiries. They are aware of how to plan their experimental work and obtain evidence by making appropriate observations and measurements. They understand the importance of considering the outcomes in terms of their original predictions. Their ability to use results in order to draw conclusions and suggest explanations is well developed. The pupils have a good knowledge of electric circuits and the purpose and uses of conductors and insulators. They are able to identify which common materials are resistant to electricity and which ones conduct electricity. The pupils' drawings and diagrams show good knowledge of electrical circuits and the symbols used to represent them. They have a very good understanding of materials and their properties. When investigating which materials are soluble, they formulate useful questions at the planning stage in order to guide their investigations, and select appropriate equipment and resources to help them. One group of pupils, calling themselves the 'Einsteins', enquired into whether a stirring action would be effective whilst another group, 'The Science Detectives', considered the effect of changes in temperature on the processes under investigation. Throughout the lesson, the pupils displayed a clear understanding when making comparisons and drawing conclusions. They have a very good understanding of how to construct fair tests. They make good use of scientific terms. Overall, the pupils' abilities to think scientifically, formulate hypotheses, select apparatus, carry out their investigations and make reasoned conclusions by careful comparison of results against agreed criteria are extremely well developed.

74. The quality of teaching is good overall, but ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. The teaching in eighty-six per cent of the lessons was satisfactory or better, and in forty-two per cent of lessons it was very good. Where it is very good, the teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and make sure that the pupils are clear about what they need to know and be able to do to undertake investigations and draw conclusions from them. Where the teaching is less secure, the teachers' questions do not sufficiently challenge the pupils and the pupils' thinking is not so rigorous. In these lessons, the pupils' progress towards understanding the key scientific ideas is slower than it need be. The teachers' medium and short term planning is thorough. It sets clear learning objectives that are well matched to the pupils' needs. The teachers encourage the pupils to talk about their work and present their own ideas to others. This is done particularly well towards the end of lessons when teachers support the pupils in interpreting the data. For example, when some of the older pupils were undertaking an evaluation of their investigations into which solids dissolve in water to make solutions, the teacher skilfully supported their discussions. The teacher, however, let the pupils draw their own conclusions and refine their understanding of the necessary conditions for conducting fair tests. This was an example of good teaching directly influencing the development of the pupils' skills in scientific enquiry. The teaching helps the pupils to develop positive attitudes to their work. They persevere and concentrate hard on the tasks. They share equipment well and are very willing to take responsibility for aspects of their learning.

ART

75. By the end of both key stages, the pupils attain above the standards expected of pupils aged seven and eleven. Standards at the school have risen significantly since the last inspection. This is because the pupils have good access to the art curriculum and because the teaching clearly values the pupils' work. The work seen in lessons, and the work exhibited around the school, is colourful, interesting and generally very well displayed. It is often related to the topics being studied in other curriculum areas such as English, geography, history and religious education. This provides the pupils with rich contexts for their artwork. For example, there are impressive paintings on African themes that show a good command of form and colour in the depiction of aspects of rural life.

76. At Key Stage 1, the pupils confidently mix colours using a variety of media. When painting and printing, they successfully blend new shades. This was seen when the pupils were using oil pastels to produce self-portraits. In the same work, the pupils demonstrated good observational skills that enabled them to represent details such as eyelashes and hairstyles. Some of the higher attaining pupils successfully used shading to add depth and texture to their sketches. The pupils make good use of sketchbooks to try out ideas and improve upon them before beginning a fair copy. They know about the work of famous artists such as Picasso and Van Gogh and they talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about different shapes, media and drawing techniques used by the artists they study. The pupils often work on large-scale art projects. In one class of pupils from Years 1 and 2, for example, the pupils created an attractive display of houses arising from their work in geography. In another class, the pupils created well designed pictures with moving parts. Some of the pupils produce attractive art deco designs for plates that capture very well the grace, spirit and style of the Clarice Cliff examples they had studied.

77. Throughout Key Stage 2, the pupils acquire new skills for recording ideas in more detail. They successfully explore a range of media including paints, pastels, crayons, charcoal, pencils papier-mâché and clay. They confidently express themselves in a good range of techniques and art forms such as collage, modelling, batik, sketching, painting, weaving and sewing. The pupils respond well to the works of famous artists and make good use of what they learn about them to develop their own techniques. There are very good examples of African art on display that demonstrate the pupils' sensitive use of colour and tone. Much good artwork arises out of work in other subjects. For example, in a Year 5 / 6 lesson, some pupils used what they had learned in history lessons to help them design and make very colourful and finely detailed Aztec ceremonial masks. Other pupils were working on attractive replicas of Mexican eye weaving designs that they intended to use as decorations. In one class the pupils used charcoal sketches to represent scenes from World War Two. These are well drawn and convey a good sense of atmosphere. The pupils draw and colour attractive pictures of Hindu divinities arising from their work in religious education. They are not afraid to tackle large-scale projects. In one class, for example, the pupils produced a very large wall display in the style of the pointillist painter, Georges Seurat, that clearly shows their understanding of his techniques and subject matter. The pupils successfully use a range of media in craft activities. These were seen in accurate and attractive models of buildings found in the village high street. Their models combined craft and design technology techniques with detailed and accurate painting to depict their features. The printing and batik work is of a good standard. The finished products are well used by the school in displays and as attractive sunblinds.

78. The teaching is usually good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The teachers prepare materials and other resources well. They have secure subject knowledge and provide the pupils with a good range of media and art forms. A strength of the teaching is the management and organisation of art activities. The lessons are lively and the pupils are productive. At both key stages, the pupils demonstrate the ability to work with a wider range of materials than they could at the time of the last inspection. The teachers take considerable care in responding to the pupils' work and display it well in classrooms and corridors. Because the teaching is good, the pupils enjoy art activities and are keen to share their work. Most pupils, therefore, work carefully, willingly try new techniques, and use different materials to achieve the effects they have in mind. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development because it provides them with opportunities to study art from different cultures and periods, and because it offers them a means of responding artistically to their experience of the natural and man-made worlds.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

79. The pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations at both key stages. Standards, therefore, have improved since the last inspection when attainment in Key Stage 1 was deemed to be

below national expectations. At both key stages, the pupils demonstrate the ability to work with a wider range of materials than they did at the time of the last inspection.

80. At Key Stage 1, the pupils design and assemble attractive moving pictures. Their designs show a consideration for the properties of the materials used. The finished products indicate satisfactory knowledge of simple levers and sliders. The pupils design and build vehicles with wheels and axles that are joined to allow movement. The pupils' design skills have significantly improved since the last inspection. "I like it because..." statements in their design books show an increased awareness of correct vocabulary and satisfactory standards of evaluation. The teachers have taken positive steps to introduce pupils to a wider range of construction materials and this is evident in the pupils' recorded work. The work on mechanisms, for example, shows the pupils making effective use of opportunities to incorporate construction kits when they design and make useful artefacts.

81. The pupils at Key Stage 2 use a suitable range of methods to generate their designs. For example, when researching their designs for slippers, they consider different variables such as size, shape, and colour. They consider their designs in the light of requirements, carefully select fabrics and materials and adapt their designs accordingly. The pupils draw on their evaluation of existing products and take into account the range of construction methods available to them. When studying structures, the pupils investigate a range of packaging and recognise that many examples are constructed from nets. When they produce labelled drawings and communicate their design ideas verbally, they show consideration for the intended use of their products. Most pupils are able to predict likely problems to be faced at the making stage.

82. The teaching is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. It makes effective use of the national, non-statutory guidelines adopted by the school in order to provide the pupils with the opportunities they need to acquire more complex skills. Although none of the teaching is unsatisfactory, the quality of the teachers' subject knowledge is not consistent across the key stage. Where subject knowledge is not so strong, the teachers are less aware of the range of practical skills associated with making, joining and combining of materials. Where it is good, the teachers maintain a brisk pace and their teaching skilfully outlines for pupils the key elements of the design and make processes. In one class of older pupils, for example, the teacher clearly had high expectations of the pupils and demanded that they took responsibility for the quality of their own work. The pupils methodically check an itemised list, without the need to consult further with their teacher, before moving on to the next stage of their activity. A strong feature of the teaching is that the pupils' work is well marked. Teachers annotate the pupil's designs and written work with comments that direct them to extend or explain their ideas more fully. They also offer suggestions to the pupils on how they could further develop their ideas. The pupils show a strong interest in design projects and behave well in lessons. They share tools sensibly and show initiative in completing tasks set for them. They confidently communicate their ideas, describing enthusiastically how they combine the component parts of their design, why they prefer their chosen materials, and what changes they will need to consider at the making stage.

GEOGRAPHY

83. By the end of both key stages, the pupils attain the standards expected for their ages. The standards attained are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection, except that the pupils now have a better knowledge and understanding of map work.

84. At Key Stage 1, the pupils acquire a satisfactory knowledge of their village. They develop good fieldwork skills and successfully record information on outline maps of the area. In one excellent lesson in Year 2, the pupils made very good use of the opportunities they had to observe geographical aspects of the village. They noted where things were located, and gave sensible reasons for them being where they were. For example, they explained the need for the staggered gates at the school entrance and why it was necessary to have a new roundabout at the junction of the school road with the main road that runs through the village. Because the lesson was well supported by adult helpers, who had

been very well briefed, the pupils made rapid progress in their learning. For example, the pupils quickly learned to be aware of the danger spots around the village and how best to secure their own safety.

85. At Key Stage 2, the pupils gain a satisfactory understanding of life in India and some of the continent's important geographical characteristics and features. The pupils develop a secure knowledge of weather systems that helps them to describe how and why weather patterns around the world are different. In one very good lesson in a Year 5/6 class, the pupils were encouraged to discuss their knowledge of world weather patterns and relate them to the prevailing climate in this country. The pupils concluded that we do not usually experience extremes of weather due to our geographical location. The pupils make good use of geographical terms such as 'maritime climate' in their discussions. When they study the local environment, they make good use of what they learn to suggest a number of ways to improve it. Work in other subjects, such as art and design and technology, demonstrates the pupils' developing understanding of aspects of their own area. For example, very well-designed and built models of the village high street illustrate the pupils' awareness of the different forms of land use and the social, industrial and commercial uses of different buildings such as churches, inns, shops and doctors' surgeries. The main weakness in the pupils' attainment is their knowledge of localities outside the United Kingdom. This is less well developed than other aspects of the subject.

86. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. However, in a very good lesson that was seen, the teacher made very effective use of a variety of resources including a video of the weather forecast that successfully captured the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. The planning of the lesson was good and pupils were provided with clear instructions and interesting and challenging activities that were suitably adapted to their different needs. In one lesson, the teaching was unsatisfactory because the teacher had planned too many activities and was unable to give sufficient teaching input to each group. Some of the pupils, therefore, lost interest and made very little progress. Generally, the teachers make good use of additional resources, including information and communication technology. They make good use, too, of visits to local places to enhance and support the pupils' learning. The teachers use a recently introduced scheme of work that is based upon a two-year teaching cycle when planning lessons. Although this is intended to ensure that the pupils in the mixed-year classes have access to the whole curriculum, the teachers do not take sufficient account of what is being taught in other classes. This has led to inequality in some aspects of provision. The school is aware of this and has begun to address the problem. Another weakness in the teaching is the lack of sufficient subject knowledge among some teachers.

HISTORY

87. The pupils' standards of attainment by the end of both key stages are in line with those expected nationally. The pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Some higher attaining pupils make good progress. Satisfactory standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

88. At Key Stage I, the pupils acquire a satisfactory understanding of chronology and change through time when they compare their own toys and games with those from the past. They know about the Great Fire of London and talk confidently about the life and work of Florence Nightingale. They talk knowledgeably about homes in the Victorian period and how they differ from modern homes because the teachers take great care to provide imaginative large-scale recreations of Victorian kitchens and parlours in their classrooms. The pupils' writing and discussions demonstrate their understanding of important aspects of the past and present, and their ability to recognise change over time.

89. At the beginning of Key Stage 2, the pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of the impact on Britain of the Roman, Saxon and Viking invasions. The older pupils acquire a sound understanding of the history and culture of Ancient Greek societies when they study the people, customs and principal events of the period. The pupils successfully explore the history of the Aztecs when they use the Internet to research useful web sites from which they download text and images for use in their own

work. The teaching in this unit of work provides the pupils with good opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of aspects of Aztec culture through work in other subjects. In art for example, the pupils use the results of their research to recreate impressive ceremonial masks and use traditional methods of weaving to produce replica Aztec patterns. These activities provide the pupils with useful insights into Aztec art and society. When the pupils learn about World War II, they consider the issues surrounding evacuation and respond well to songs and music from the era. They show a good understanding of how to use evidence from a range of secondary sources such as photographs, pictures and sound and video recordings. The pupils make good progress in their ability to interpret the information from these sources and are able to suggest explanations for historical events and changes. In one class, the pupils demonstrated their ideas on the conditions of war in atmospheric charcoal sketches that successfully depict some of the war's more dramatic events.

90. The teaching of history is satisfactory overall. There are some strong features, such as the teachers' good subject knowledge, skilful questioning techniques and good use of resources in music and art to extend the pupils' knowledge of history. The learning activities are well prepared and the pupils well managed. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and levels of interest. The teachers' long term plans ensure that the pupils have access to a balanced and broad curriculum. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the teachers arrange very good displays in the classrooms such as those that show Victorian homes and ways in which life has changed. These help to bring the subject to life and encourage the pupils to explore for themselves a good range of historical ideas and facts. They help the pupils to compare aspects of the past with those of the present such as changes in cultural, social and moral values.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

91. The standard attained by the pupils at Key Stage 1 is appropriate to their age. The standard attained by the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 exceeds that expected of eleven-year-olds in most aspects of the subject except control and monitoring. Standards at the school have improved significantly since the last inspection because the school now has a useful scheme of work to guide the teachers' planning, and the teachers have begun to make better use of the available learning resources. The school's plans to further improve its resources are well advanced and appropriate to the needs of the pupils.

92. At Key Stage 1, the pupils know how to manoeuvre the mouse to activate menus and move objects on the screen. They use their knowledge of simple drawing tools to produce colourful pictures to illustrate their work. For example, the pupils use a simple graphics program to draw shapes, arrange them on the screen and add blocks of colour. They use a word processing program to type simple sentences and labels and use other programs to support learning in mathematics, English and science. In English, for example, they make good use of a word processing program when they write 'thank you' letters.

93. At Key Stage 2, the pupils attain well above the expected standards for their age in word processing, desktop publishing, multimedia presentations and use of the Internet for research. They draft and edit their work and confidently change textual features such as size, colour and type of font in order to make the printed copies communicate more effectively. They skilfully search web pages on the Internet and save text and images from them, which they cut and paste into their own work. They know how to position images on the page and how to resize them. The pupils use their skills to create electronic books for pupils in Year 2. These books demonstrate the pupils' very good use of clip art to create backgrounds and character illustrations in their stories. Most of the pupils make very good use of CD-ROM reference materials such as encyclopaedias to support learning in history, geography and religious education. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils used a multimedia program to design a slide show about the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs that included animated effects, clipart, photographic images and text. In another lesson, the pupils successfully added hyperlinks to sound effects that they had

recorded earlier. The pupils attain satisfactory standards in their use of databases for collating, sorting and presenting information in the form of graphs or spreadsheets. Most pupils, however, have insufficient knowledge or experience of using control technology or monitoring devices to enable them to attain satisfactory standards because the school does not yet have the appropriate resources.

94. The teaching is at least satisfactory and much of it is good or better. It has improved significantly since the last inspection, enabling the pupils to make good progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6. This is mainly because the teachers now timetable sessions for the different year groups within their classes and use the school's new scheme of work effectively to plan lessons in basic skills. A strength of the teaching is the success the teachers have in managing the pupils' access to the limited resources currently available at the school. Another strength is the way that the teachers link work in the subject with activities in other areas of the curriculum. For example, the teachers routinely encourage their pupils to use computers to support learning in English, mathematics and science, and reference programs to enhance work in history and science. The teaching in Years 5 and 6 makes very effective use of adult help. For example, in some lessons an adult volunteer supervises pupils well when they use the Internet. She uses her own subject expertise to ensure that the pupils make effective use of the information they locate when they design and produce their presentations. The teaching makes very good use of the expertise of the technician to ensure that equipment is well maintained and to support some of the more advanced work that the pupils do. The school has very strong links with the local high school, which it uses well to provide the pupils with opportunities to work on a much wider range of learning resources. The main weakness in the teaching is the lack of sufficient subject knowledge in some aspects of control and monitoring. However, the school is taking appropriate steps to improve the teachers' confidence and subject expertise. It has conducted an audit of the teachers' levels of knowledge and is implementing a useful programme of professional development. It has recently invested wisely in commercial products that provide very good support to teachers in planning and teaching the full range of skills and knowledge.

MUSIC

95. The standards the pupils attain by the end of both key stages are in line with those expected nationally. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

96. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils sing a good range of songs, paying attention to tempo and dynamics. The pupils successfully sustain rhythms whilst listening, playing or singing. They know the names of a variety of percussion and wind instruments. Throughout Key Stage 2, the pupils compose music, confidently play a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments and sing an increasingly demanding repertoire of songs. They make steady progress in learning, understanding and applying musical terms such as *tempo* and *dynamics*, and they devise simple compositions in which they successfully develop and use basic notation. The pupils listen carefully to recorded music and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss and appraise it. Throughout the school, the pupils enjoy singing. They sing tunefully and with expression. They know and perform a good range of songs and hymns. The pupils make good use of the opportunities provided to listen to a wide range of musical styles both in lessons and in assemblies. In one class at Key Stage 2, the pupils sometimes listen to recorded music when they are working on other subjects because it helps them to concentrate. The pupils respond well to music. They are eager to get involved in singing and in instrumental activities and they remain focussed and attentive throughout the lessons. They handle instruments well and treat them with care and respect.

97. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall. In some lessons, the teaching is good. The school has no specialist music teachers, but it has worked hard to extend the teachers' subject knowledge through its provision of opportunities for professional development and by implementing a useful scheme of work. The school has begun to adapt the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's music scheme in order to provide the pupils with a richer and better structured curriculum. The school enhances the opportunities the pupils have to participate in musical activities by making available a

good range of activities outside normal lessons. The teaching makes effective use of the good range of traditional percussion instruments available. The range of instruments from other cultures and musical traditions is, however, too limited. The teaching provides the pupils with a range of well-planned experiences that enable them to make steady progress. Music-making and singing are positive features of the school and are enjoyed by all of the pupils. The school makes effective use of visiting teachers to provide weekly lessons in playing the violin, electronic keyboard, guitar, and a number of brass and wind instruments. The school also provides recorder lessons and opportunities to play in the school orchestra and sing in the choir. Professionals, such as the ballet group that performed the *Nutcracker Suite* when they visited the school, make a good contribution to the pupils' understanding and appreciation of music. Many of the pupils participate in the line-dancing club with enthusiasm and skill. These activities allow the pupils to experience a good range of vibrant and meaningful musical activities. This ensures that the musical curriculum makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

98. It was not possible to observe lessons in Key Stage 1. However, discussions with teachers and an analysis of their planning indicate that the activities provided at the school are appropriate to pupils' ages and that the pupils attain at least satisfactory standards. The planning emphasises the development of basic games' skills and offers good opportunities for the pupils to explore a range of movements in gymnastics and dance. The standards attained by the pupils at Key Stage 2 are above average. The good standards at the school, therefore, have been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils' ability to plan, perform and evaluate their performances is well developed and helps them to improve the quality of their work.

99. At Key Stage 2, the pupils make good progress in developing a range of skills related to co-operative team games, in using equipment and in adhering to simple rules. They show a growing awareness of technique in the way they control their actions and use the available equipment when they pass or run with the ball. Good examples of these skills were seen in lessons in which the pupils participated in small-sided invasion games and when practising specific skills such as sending and receiving the ball. The pupils perform well in dance lessons and show control and fluency in their movements. They skilfully perform a wide range of movement patterns to different musical rhythms and sounds. The pupils successfully incorporate moments of stillness into their sequences and show a good ability to reflect on the quality of their performance in order to improve it. For example, the pupils were observed planning their movements as toy soldiers in response to the music of Tchaikowski's '*Nutcracker*' and their work was taken a stage further, following the teacher's demonstration, when the pupils displayed a greater variation of height in their subsequent movements. Their completed dance phrases showed good standards of control, agility, fluency and mood. The pupils' dance skills are reflected in their general gymnastic abilities where pupils exhibit good control when travelling at speed, on different levels and in different directions. The pupils begin and conclude their movements with precision. Almost all of the pupils attain the standard expected of them in swimming by the end of Key Stage 2. They show an awareness of correct body position in the water and successfully employ a range of recognised strokes whilst swimming on their front and back. All of the pupils are confident in the water. They are all fully conversant with safety requirements and observe them in and around the pool.

100. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be mainly satisfactory. The teachers plan the lessons well and make clear to the pupils what it is they are expected to know and be able to do by the end of them. The activities present the pupils with an appropriate level of physical and intellectual challenge. The teaching makes good use of the resources. These are well organised before each lesson so that no teaching time is wasted. The teaching takes full account of the range of demands the various parts of the lesson make on the pupils. For example, the pupils are taught how to protect their bodies from injury by warming up and cooling down carefully at the beginning and end of sessions. The teachers'

subject knowledge ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Most teachers have high expectations of the pupils and deliver the lessons at a good pace. They provide a range of opportunities for pupils to practise, improve and evaluate their skills, and to describe the performance of other pupils. In games' lessons, the teaching emphasises the development of the pupils' attitudes towards fair play and the need to understand and abide by established conventions and rules. The teachers use demonstration effectively to guide the pupils' learning. They offer clear explanations of the skills the pupils need to acquire as well as the requirements of tasks set for them. A marked feature of the teaching is the effective use of praise to motivate the pupils to refine and adapt their performance. The teachers successfully communicate to the pupils their own enjoyment in delivering physical education lessons and encourage the pupils to have fun as well as to work hard.

101. One outcome of the strong teaching is the excellent standard of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. A major contributory factor to the pupils' progress and levels of achievement is their enthusiasm and keenness to participate, and their willingness to sustain effort. The pupils listen carefully to instructions, concentrate well and clearly enjoy the tasks they are set. The older pupils co-operate well and develop well the principles of teamwork and consideration of others. The school offers a comprehensive range of activities outside normal lessons. These activities make an important contribution to the standards achieved and greatly add to the pupils' social and personal development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

102. By the end of both key stages, the pupils attain standards well above those expected of pupils aged seven and eleven. The school has significantly improved standards since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be broadly in line with national expectations. The teaching and learning of religious education is now a strength of the school.

103. The pupils at Key Stage 1 understand the significance of festivals as special celebrations that have a religious meaning. For example, they know that some Christians offer thanks to God for the annual harvest. The pupils use their computer skills well to communicate their ideas about harvest festivals when they draw attractive pictures and compose perceptive short descriptions and prayers. The pupils understand why Christians give gifts at Christmas, and explore their own experiences of giving and receiving gifts. They show a developing awareness of the concept of "preciousness". One Year 2 pupil, for example, explained that inside his drawing of a wrapped gift was the teddy bear given to him at birth, whilst another pupil wrote, "my precious gift is *love*. It costs no money." The pupils explain clearly what it means to belong to a group such as a family or a team, and they successfully relate it to their own experience at home and at school. They write sensitively about their thoughts and feelings on the different groups to which they belong, and they describe what is involved in belonging to a family. They link these ideas with the Christian idea of belonging to God's family when they record their personal involvement in baptism and explain that it is a religious service that marks the Church's acceptance of a new member. The pupils reflect sensibly on their own beliefs and values and on those of others. They know that sometimes a person's values or beliefs are given physical expression in actions such as prayer and singing, and in the use of symbolic items such as crosses, prayer mats and candles. The pupils know, for example, that some Christians, Jews and Sikhs wear special items as symbols of their religious affiliation.

104. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils show an excellent knowledge of world religions. They have a thorough understanding of the Hanukkah, a festival of light, and its importance within the Jewish religion. They successfully explain the length of the festival and the function of the symbols used. They relate the significance of the 'menorah' to the life of Judah Maccabee and make comparisons between Judaism and Christianity in recognising light as a symbol of the presence of God. Their work also shows a good knowledge and understanding of other Jewish festivals such as Succot, the festival of harvest thanksgiving. The pupils explain the function of various religious artefacts through their study of Judaism. When, for example, they were presented with a miniature "torah" they described what its use was, where it may be found and its importance within the Jewish faith. The school has

taken positive steps since the last inspection to acquire appropriate artefacts and to utilise them to enrich pupils' experiences of world religions. The pupils, therefore, have an above average knowledge and understanding of religious items. The younger pupils within Key Stage 2 talk confidently about their knowledge of the Hindu religion. They know why Divali is important to Hindus, and they explain other features of Hindu beliefs when they retell the story of Rama and Sita. The pupils have a good understanding of the similarities in the religions they study. In one lesson, this enabled them to explain the similarities between Christmas cards that conveyed a religious message and Hindu cards celebrating Divali. They understand why light is a potent symbol in some religions. By the age of eleven, the pupils have a good knowledge of the life and work of Jesus, and of Christian beliefs and festivals. They successfully compare these with what they know about other religions.

105. The teaching is good and, occasionally, it is very good. The teachers have secure subject knowledge. They plan lessons thoroughly, making sure that the pupils are aware of what it is they are to learn by the end of each lesson. A strength of the teaching is the careful way the teachers match learning tasks to the needs of the pupils and set appropriate levels of challenge for all of them. The teachers have high expectations of all pupils and provide opportunities for them to reflect on, analyse and evaluate their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions. The good teaching ensures that the pupils work hard and achieve well. The resources are well displayed around the school and act as a positive stimulus to learning. Because the teaching is good, the pupils have a strong interest in their work and clearly enjoy their learning. They participate keenly in lessons and show respect for other cultures, particularly when handling and describing religious artefacts. They present their work well in a range of forms and show genuine pride in their achievements. The pupils respond well to questions and are keen to co-operate when they work in groups. They invest much intellectual effort in discussions. In key-stage and whole-school assemblies, the pupils remain attentive and well behaved.

106. The teaching provides many opportunities for quiet reflection that makes a significant contribution to pupils' religious and spiritual development. For example, the purpose of collective worship is made clear to everyone. The assemblies make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. The aims of the school are strongly reflected in the school's religious education provision. The subject contributes much to the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. The school's strong links with the local church are well used to help the pupils understand religious ideas and practices. The newly revised scheme of work is based on the locally agreed syllabus. It ensures that the religious education offered by the school is predominantly Christian in nature whilst taking good account of the other principal religious traditions represented in the United Kingdom.